

Jim Edgar Panther Creek

STATE FISH & WILDLIFE AREA



Illinois
Department of
Natural Resources

Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area

A 26-square-mile tract situated in the gently rolling countryside of west-central Illinois, Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area is one of the Department of Natural Resources' largest blocks of property. It is located in Cass County between Ashland and Chandlerville, 25 miles northwest of Springfield off State Route 125.

A mosaic of mature forestland, agricultural land and grassland, the fish and wildlife area is dissected by Panther and Cox creeks and their tributaries. In addition to 6,000 acres of timberland and 3,600 acres of prime farmland, a rare hill prairie can be found there. The property is also home to a rich assortment of wildlife, including the Indiana bat, northern harrier and red-shouldered hawk—all endangered or threatened species—and game species such as the white-tailed deer, wild turkey, ring-necked pheasant and mourning dove.

Site History

Settled and farmed by the mid-1800s, the contiguous farmsteads that composed the site were purchased from 1968-1974 by Commonwealth Edison for development of a coal-fired, electric-power generating plant and a 5,000-acre

cooling lake. The company named the 15,574-acre tract "Site M" for nearby Menard County where coal to fuel the power plant was to be mined. Commonwealth Edison leased about half of the acreage for cropland, and, through a cooperative agreement with the Department of Natural Resources, also provided limited upland and forest game hunting. Through the years, hunters applying for permits to the area became well-acquainted with the Site M name.

In the 1980s, Commonwealth Edison abandoned its plans to build a power plant there and offered the land for sale. By virtue of its size and location, the property became an unparalleled opportunity for the Department of Natural Resources to address critical conservation needs and meet outdoor recreation demands. With funds specifically designated for conservation purposes, the state of Illinois added the acreage to the public trust in June 1993, making the site the largest tract ever acquired by the Department. On January 1, 2000, the name of the site was officially changed to Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area.

Conservation Efforts

Forests, confined primarily to steep terrain, cover 6,000 acres of the Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area. Common hardwood species include American elm, black walnut, black cherry and several types of oaks, including white, black and bur. Because the timberland was affected by extensive logging and grazing through the years, the Department is managing the site to enhance its forest wildlife habitat.

Scattered pockets of wetlands at the site are associated with upland depressions, farm ponds and drainage ways. Common plants in these areas include long-leaved and horned pondweed, duckweed, rice cutgrass, reed canary grass and bulrush, as well as black willow. A severely degraded segment of Cox and Panther creeks, near their confluence in the northwestern portion of the property, is undergoing stream bank stabilization and is part of a model watershed project to improve the Illinois River system.

Because agriculture on a lease basis is an integral management component for conservation and fiscal purposes, about 3,600 acres of the site are leased as cropland to farmers using conservation-oriented agricultural practices.

To control soil erosion, some 6,500 acres that were once used as cropland are permanently idle. This acreage is undergoing revegetation and plantings of 850 acres of native grass to improve upland habitat.

Natural Heritage

An outstanding example of the original loess hill prairies of central Illinois is the site's Cox Creek Hill Prairie Natural Area. The 175-acre parcel encompasses remnants of scattered hill prairies composed of loess (windblown silt), which occur within forest openings on steep terrain where soils are droughty and well-drained. Among the plant species found on loess hill prairies are little bluestem, side-oats grama, fringed puccoon, wild petunia and prairie dock.

Several rare Illinois plant species grow here. The small white lady's-slipper orchid has state-endangered status, while four other plants are listed as state-threatened species: the savanna blazing star, the pale false foxglove and Hill's thistle.

Surveys have identified 87 species of breeding birds at the area. Among the notable residents are eastern bluebird, orchard oriole and lark sparrow, plus 11 warbler species, five types of woodpecker and three species of owl. Loggerhead shrikes, a threatened species in Illinois, have been observed at the site, as have endangered and threatened northern harriers and red-shouldered hawks.



Equestrian, Hiking, Biking Trails

Two 22-car/trailer parking lots, along with the 26-mile Governor's Hiking and Equestrian Trail, are located in the northwest corner of the property. A 51 site Class A Equestrian campground opened in August of 1999. A 24-mile hiking and mountain bike trail circumvents the 210-acre Lake and is open from April 16-October 31. Hikers will also find three miles of trails at Gridley Lake. A paved bicycle trail starts at 011 Parking Lot or the Park Office and makes a 9.5-mile loop. Those wanting a shorter trek may enjoy a 1/4-mile wildflower trail located at the Park Office.

Picnicking

Picnicking is available at Painter Pond, Gurney Pond, Geiss Pond and Gridley Lake and Westlake Day Use areas.

Hunting

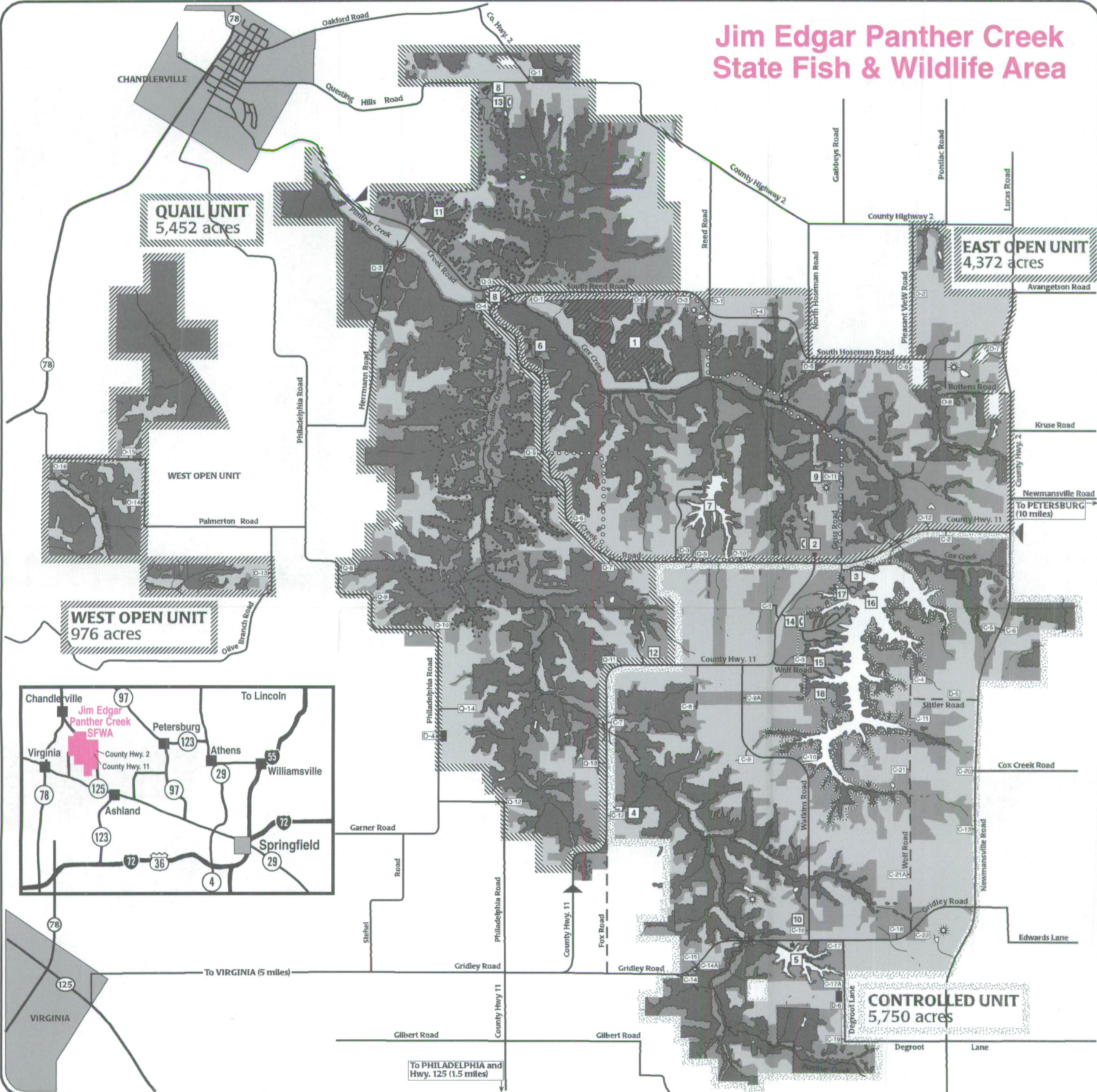
Hunting is allowed for white-tailed deer, wild turkey and mourning dove, as well as upland species (pheasant, quail, woodcock, snipe and rabbit), furbearers (raccoon, opossum, red fox, gray fox, striped skunk and coyote) and squirrels. Season dates and hours, permit requirements and other regulations are published in the Illinois Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations and in the Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area's own hunting digest, available through the Department of Natural Resources.

A notable aspect of the site's hunting opportunities is its participation in the Department of Natural Resources' Quality Deer Management Program. Here, and at other DNR sites designated as Quality Deer Management areas, only antlerless deer or deer with a minimum of four points

on one side may be taken during the archery and firearm deer seasons. The program protects 1- and 2-year-old bucks to provide future opportunities for harvesting trophy-size deer, while managing local herds through the taking of does and other antlerless deer. Non-resident participation in archery deer hunting is restricted by permit. Sunflower fields are situated throughout the property to accommodate dove hunting. Dove hunting is by special permit the first five days of the season. Upland game hunting is zoned into four units, based on habitat suitability, to provide a choice of hunting options. Designated parking areas are provided.

The hunter check station, located in a former farmhouse on County Highway 11, handles all hunting administrative functions.

Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish & Wildlife Area



KEY

- primary site entrance
- forest
- grassland
- cropland
- hiking trail
- equestrian - hiking trail
- mountain bike - hiking trail
- bike route
- primary road
- secondary road
- creek, intermittent stream
- lake, pond
- fishing pond
- parking lot
- telephone

USE AREAS

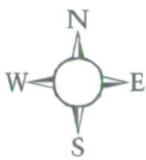
- 1 Cox Creek Hill Prairie Natural Area
- 2 Office and Check Station
- 3 Westlake Day Use Area and Boat Access
- 4 Painter Pond Day Use Area
- 5 Gridley Lake Day Use Area and Boat Access
- 6 Jake's Point Overlook
- 7 Drake Lake Day Use Area and Boat Access
- 8 Governor's Trail Parking and Trailhead
- 9 Geiss Pond Fishing Area- Bike Route Trailhead
- 10 Field Trial Headquarters Area
- 11 Hermann Pond Fishing Area
- 12 Gurney Pond Fishing Area (Trout Pond)
- 13 Questing Hills Equestrian Campground
- 14 Family Campground
- 15 Group Campground
- 16 Lake Point Shelter
- 17 Mt. Bike Trailhead
- 18 Primitive Campground

SITE INFORMATION

Emergency:
• Phone site office at 217/452-7741, or phone 911. Give on-site location.
• For additional information contact site office: 10149 County Highway 11, Chandlerville, IL 62627, or phone 217/452-7741, or www.dnr.state.il.us.

Rules:
• Groups of 25 or more must register at the site office.
• One responsible adult must accompany each group of 15 minors.
• All pets must be leashed.

Thank You:
• Thank you. We hope you enjoy your stay. Remember, take only memories, leave only footprints.
Developed by Office of Reality & Environmental Planning.



Fishing

The 210-acre Lake, Gridley Lake and seven farm ponds are available for sport fishing. All have been stocked with largemouth bass, redear sunfish, bluegill and channel catfish. Muskie have been stocked in the 210-acre Lake.

Stream fishes include largemouth bass, bluegill and green sunfish, along with shiners, chubs and minnows. Beginning in the fall of 2003, Drake Lake, a new 35-acre lake, will provide excellent sportfishing.

Camping

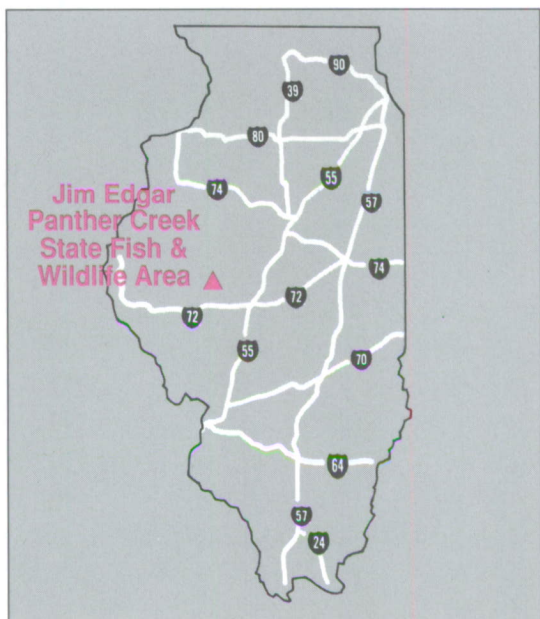
In 2002, Illinois' first Class AA campground containing sewer drops, water and electricity at individual sites opened. Eighteen Class AA sites, 64 Class A sites and nine Rent-a-Cabins are available at Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area. Each cabin contains a decked porch, two rooms, two sets of bunk beds, a double bed, a drop-down table, ceiling lights/fans and a wall heater. Although no smoking or cooking is allowed inside a cabin, a grill and picnic table outside the cabin provides the perfect setting for preparing a meal. Campers are advised to bring an electric heater should weather and personal comfort require.

Reservations may be made for the calendar year starting January 2nd. Requests must be in writing before the first working day of February; telephone reservations are accepted thereafter. Reservations for cabins and Class AA sites must be made at least by the close of business the Friday before the week of the reservation. Contact the Park Office Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. for fee and refund policy information.

For more information, contact Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area, 10149 County Highway 11, Chandlerville, IL 62627, or phone (217) 452-7741.



RENT-A-CABIN



Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish & Wildlife Area

10149 County Highway 11

Chandlerville, IL 62627, (217) 452-7741

- While groups of 25 or more are welcome and encouraged to use the park's facilities, they are required to register in advance with the site office to avoid crowding or scheduling conflicts.
 - At least one responsible adult must accompany each group of 15 minors.
 - Pets must be kept on leashes at all times.
 - Actions by nature can result in closed roads and other facilities.
- We hope you enjoy your stay. Remember, take only memories, leave only footprints.
- For more information on state parks, write to the Department of Natural Resources, Office of Public Services, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271, call (217) 782-6302 or visit our website at <http://dnr.state.il.us>.
 - For more information on tourism in Illinois, call the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs' Bureau of Tourism at 1-800-2CONNECT.
 - Hearing-impaired individuals may call the Department of Natural Resources' TTY number, (217) 782-9175, or use the Ameritech Relay Number, 1-800-526-0844.

Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and those funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other non-merit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the funding source's civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, IDNR, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271; (217) 785-0067; TTY (217) 782-9175. This information may be provided in an alternative format if required. Contact the DNR Clearinghouse at (217) 782-7498 for assistance.